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With \$1 Million Donation, William Penn Foundation Invests in Statewide Effort to Ensure Fair, Accurate Census Count

HARRISBURG (Sept. 3, 2019) – The William Penn Foundation today awarded \$1 million to the nonpartisan Keystone Counts coalition to support its efforts to ensure a fair and accurate count in the 2020 census in Pennsylvania. The William Penn Foundation joined several other foundations to support the statewide coalition’s effort to run a “Get Out the Count” campaign.

“What happens in this census will affect our commonwealth for the next 10 years. We have to get this right,” said Erin Casey, executive director of Pennsylvania Voice. “That is why we are excited to have the William Penn Foundation become a strategic partner with the Keystone Counts coalition. This funding support will help us dramatically increase the field campaign we have planned to ensure residents know they need to stand up and be counted.”

Much is at stake in the 2020 census. Communities of color, rural populations, immigrants, and children in Pennsylvania --- and across the country --- are historically undercounted in the census and are at risk of being undercounted again. Since census numbers are used to determine funding toward schools, health centers, public transportation, and more, ensuring that all communities are accurately counted is crucial.

An accurate census count is also essential in making sure that all Pennsylvanians have access to political power. Redistricting is based on the census, so legislative maps could be drawn unfairly if communities of color are not counted accurately. Congressional reappointment is also based on the census, so the state could easily lose House representatives and Electoral College votes.

“It’s as important as ever to start mobilizing our communities to take the census in 2020,” Keystone Counts Coalition Manager Jo Lin said. “Our ‘Get Out the Count’ plan is rooted in research, grassroots organizing, and years of strategizing. We’re working together to ensure our communities take civic action.”

Keystone Counts has been developing its “Get Out the Count” campaign plan since 2017. Using a variety of civic engagement field methods --- like event canvassing, door-knocking, SMS, and more --- the coalition plans to contact up to the 1.2 million households across 24 hard-to-count counties in the commonwealth by May 2020.

“A complete and accurate census count is critical to ensuring Pennsylvania receives its fair share of resources, yet the barriers to achieving a complete count are higher than ever,” said Shawn McCaney, Executive Director of the William Penn Foundation. “Public funding allocations for essential services over the next decade will be determined by this census, so it’s critical we work together to prevent an undercount.”

The William Penn Foundation’s \$1 million grant is the largest census-related award yet in the commonwealth, and it comes just weeks after Pennsylvania, unlike several other states, enacted a new fiscal year budget without any public funds for census work.

The grant also comes days before several Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states will convene a regional summit in Philadelphia to share strategies to encourage census participation among undercounted populations.

Several other foundations recognize what an undercount could mean for Pennsylvania.

“Our region will lose an estimated \$2,000 for every person not counted. Now’s the time for both government and philanthropy to step up with big dollars to ensure an accurate count or our entire region will suffer. That’s why Samuel S. Fels Fund made a \$150,000 commitment to Keystone Counts last March. We applaud the William Penn Foundation and others for their commitment and encourage more to join us,” said Sarah Martinez-Helfman, president of the Samuel S. Fels Fund.

The census ensures municipalities get their share of more than \$883 billion in federal funds distributed each year for 55 large census-guided programs, [according to the George Washington University Institute of Public Policy](#).

Pennsylvania currently receives more than \$39 billion annually through census-backed programs, so an undercount could cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Earlier this year, the bipartisan statewide Census 2020 Complete Count Commission, on which Casey serves, requested state budget funding totaling an amount equal to \$1 per person currently residing in the state.

“The philanthropic community understands the importance of the census to communities and the programs they run. They’re stepping into leadership,” Casey said. “Elected officials should also step into this responsibility to ensure every resident is counted, no one is left out, and Pennsylvania doesn’t fall behind.”

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Keystone Counts is a nonpartisan coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, and community organizations joined together to build an education and outreach effort for a fair and accurate 2020 census. For more information, visit www.KeystoneCounts.org. The coalition is staffed and managed by Pennsylvania Voice.



What some of the other funders are saying about the Keystone Counts coalition's "Get Out the Count" campaign and their reasons supporting the statewide effort.

The Philadelphia Foundation

Amount: \$50,000

*"Knowing the criticality of the census to our region and the risk of an undercount of our most vulnerable neighbors, supporting Keystone Counts' early effort was an important philanthropic investment for the Philadelphia Foundation," President and CEO **Pedro A. Ramos** said.*

Philadelphia Health Partners

Amount: \$50,000

*"Philadelphia Health Partnership believes that every person counts when it comes to securing the census derived funding that our state and counties need to invest in community health and wellbeing," Executive Director **Ann Marie Healy** said. "Partners across sectors have a role to play in supporting census outreach and advocacy led by Keystone Counts."*

Jefferson Regional Foundation

Amount: \$25,000

*"As a health funder in Pittsburgh's South Hills and Mon Valley communities, we know that attracting critical government and community resources for the next decade will depend upon accurate Census data collected in 2020," said Chief Executive Officer **Mary Phan-Gruber**. "Keystone Counts is a skilled and important partner in helping to develop an effective nonpartisan outreach program to ensure that all community members – including our seniors, families with lower incomes, and foreign-born residents are counted in order to build the vitality of our region."*

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